

Jefferson City Animal Shelter

Jefferson City, MO 65109

Foster Kitten Handbook



Important numbers

Business hours (M-Sat 8am-4:30pm): 573-634-6429

Foster placement texts + after-hours emergency calls:

573-326-9533

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome Letter	3
Are you a foster kitten candidate?	4
Types of Foster Kittens	5
Procedures for Pickup, Rechecks and Return	6
Get Ready!	7
Safeguarding all the Animals	10
General Kitten Care	11
Feeding Bottle Babies	13
Chart: Kitten Bottle Feeding + Stomach Capacity	14
Kitten Feeding and Development by Age	15
Record: Daily Weight and Feeding (use as needed if desired)	16
Weaning Your Bottle Baby	17
Fostering Moms and Babies	18
Maintaining Kitten Health	19
Illness in Foster Kittens	20
Diarrhea	20
Constipation	20
Intestinal Parasites	21
Skin Parasites	21
Ringworm	22
Vomiting	22
Sneezing, Nasal and Eye Discharge	22
Fading Kitten Syndrome	23
Emergencies	24
TID BITS	25

Welcome Letter

Dear Foster Family,

You are about to embark on a memorable live-saving adventure! Thank you for opening your home and heart to orphan kittens. Kittens younger than eight weeks old are the most at-risk population in our shelter.

Fostering orphaned kittens is a rewarding process that saves hundreds of lives in our community each year, and we could not do it without you! In this manual, you will find helpful tips to ensure success. Orphaned kittens require consistent love and attention that is difficult to provide in a shelter environment. These kittens are typically only placed in foster homes until they are big enough to undergo spay/neuter surgery at around 2 months of age. We encourage fosters to take more than one kitten at a time to help promote socialization and normal behavioral growth. When kittens are unable to have appropriate social interaction with other kittens it can stunt proper socialization and lead to behavioral problems. Multiple kittens are not only fun, they can also self-entertain.

There are several requirements to be the perfect foster for this type of animal. If the requirements included in the following section do not work well with your current schedule, please let us know. We can help you find a foster situation that will work best for you!

Sincerely,
The Jefferson City Animal Shelter



Are you a foster kitten candidate?



TIME

Are you able to devote the required time daily?

TYPE OF FOSTER	DURATION OF FOSTER	DAILY COMMITMENT
Weaned Kittens	1-3 weeks	2 hours
URI Cats/Kittens	2-3 weeks	1-2 hours
Kittens with Mom	2-8 weeks	1-2 hours or more
Injured Cat	1 week- 2 months	1-2 hours
Neonate Kittens	6-8 weeks	Up to 8 hours

Are you able to bring your foster animal to the shelter for vaccinations and wellness exams every 3 weeks?

Are you able to contact the JCAS or bring your foster animal to the shelter in an emergency?

Are you at least 18 years old?



SPACE

Are you able to separate your foster animals from your household pets for at least two weeks to protect them from illnesses and allow for proper adjustment period?

Are you able to handle cleaning procedures such as washing hands after every encounter and cleaning and disinfecting the kittens' quarters routinely?

Are you able to handle any potential home damage (carpet, clothing, and/or furniture) associated with animals?



CARE

Are you prepared to handle sickness or possible death of your foster animal?

Are you able to emotionally handle letting go of the foster animal after becoming attached once their foster period is over?

Are you able to handle the potential of foster animals carrying illness that could affect your household animals / family?

Types of Foster Kittens

For the most part, kittens in the foster care program are those who have not yet reached the 2-pound minimum weight required to undergo spay/neuter surgery prior to adoption. There are some differences in the types of kittens needing foster care. You may decide to foster a variety or specialize in a certain type of foster. This decision may be affected by your work schedule, your resident pets, the activity level in your home or other factors.



BOTTLE BABIES: These are orphaned neonatal kittens ranging in age from 1 day to 4 weeks old without a mother cat to nurse from. They need to be bottle-fed every 3 to 4 hours around the clock for the first 3 weeks; less often from 4 weeks and on. They need to be burped, and stimulated to urinate and defecate after each feeding. They also need to be kept clean and warm constantly. These guys are a lot of work, but can be extremely rewarding.

MOTHERS AND KITTENS: These kittens may also range from 1 day old and older but have their mother to care for them and nurse from. This foster will involve primarily caring for the mother cat until the kittens are about 5 weeks old. Around this time mom begins to wean the kittens and the kittens start eating food on their own. Ideally, mom is kept with her kittens until they are 8 weeks old, which benefits the kittens social skill development. Mom can be returned for adoption before her kittens reach 2 pounds, if needed.

WEIGHT GAINERS (4 WEEKS +): This is generally the shortest fostering situation since the kittens are older. It usually takes kittens about 2 months (8 weeks) to reach the 2 pound minimum weight for spay/neuter surgery. So, this could be as short as a 2-week foster commitment. They are eating on their own, usually have good litter box habits and have learned to clean themselves. However, this is also the time they are transitioning from formula to food and may have gastrointestinal problems leading to diarrhea. Younger kittens in this group are often messy eaters too, requiring frequent cleaning.

BEHAVIORAL KITTENS: Ideally, kittens should be introduced to human handling between 2 and 7 weeks of age. If not, they will learn to fear human interaction. We frequently refer to these kittens as “un-socialized” or “feral”. These kittens usually require intensive treatment due to the small window of time with which we are working to convince them that human contact can be pleasurable. Unfortunately, not all “un-socialized” or “feral” kittens come around to the idea of accepting human contact as ok, no matter how much love and attention you give some just never come around to the idea and may not be adoptable

Procedures for Pickup, Rechecks and Return

Pickup

Once you have completed the foster orientation and training, you are ready to foster kittens! We will place you on our phone/text alert system, and send out a message notifying you of kittens needing foster placement. When you respond to our message, we will arrange for a convenient pick-up time. Please understand that we try to place the kittens in foster care as soon as possible to minimize their stay in the shelter environment. Therefore, the kittens will be sent out with the foster parent who responds first to our contact efforts.

Rechecks

When you pick up your foster(s), we will schedule a date and time for them to return. You will receive a reminder card with this information. Generally, kittens return every 3 weeks for vetting until 2 pounds, at which time they are spayed/neutered and placed for adoption. Therefore, if your kittens are not yet 2 pounds, they will be sent back with you.

Veterinary care for foster animals is provided by the vet staff at the Jefferson City Animal Shelter during normal business hours (Monday-Friday 8am-4:30pm). The Jefferson City Animal Shelter has a policy that we will NOT reimburse individuals for vet bills for foster animals when taken to veterinary care outside of that which is pre-authorized by the shelter.

While we are open on Saturdays for adoptions, we try to schedule recheck exams during a weekday if possible. We have only 2-3 staff members working on Saturdays, which makes foster rechecks on Saturdays very stressful for our staff on top of essential job tasks.

If for any reason you are unable to keep your scheduled appointment, please call the Shelter to reschedule during normal business hours at 573-634-6429.

Return

Generally, once your kittens reach the 2lb weight goal, they are ready to go back to the shelter for spay/neuter surgery. Kittens should also be successfully weaned from their mother, eating dry food exclusively, successfully socialized and healthy/recovered from any illness.

If your schedule allows, bring them back for drop-off on the morning indicated on your reminder card between 8:30-9am. Adult cats can have dinner the night before, but no breakfast. Kittens can have a small meal of dry food (1-2 tablespoons) the morning of surgery. They can have water. You will need to prepare yourself and your family for the return of your foster kitten(s) because once they are brought in for their surgery, they will stay at the shelter and go up for adoption.

Get Ready!

Preparing the Kitty Room

Before you bring home your foster kittens, make sure that you have a suitable place for them to stay. A bathroom often works well. The kitten room should adhere to the following guidelines:

- A space where temperature can be controlled (kept warm), and is not drafty
- The space can be easily cleaned and disinfected by using a mild bleach solution
 - Clean first to remove gross debris, such as with 409 or Dawn/water solution
 - Bleach
 - General disinfection 1:32 (1 part bleach to 32 parts water)
 - Ringworm disinfection 1:10 (1 part bleach to 32 parts water) *with 10 minutes contact time*
- Separate from other household pet(s)
- Can withstand kitty messes: litter box accidents, vomit, spilled water, etc
- No breakable items
- Electrical outlets and wires are blocked
- No small items
- Secured windows (closed or with a secure screen)
- Secured appliances (toilet lids closed)

Needed Supplies

The Jefferson City Animal Shelter will provide you with virtually all the supplies you will need. Supplies that you may wish to supply include a small kitchen scale for weighing kittens, toys, brushes/combs and an electrical heating pad (if we're unable to supply you with a warming disc).

CARRIER: An appropriate sized carrier will be provided to transport the fosters home and also to bring them back and forth for vetting. Please note that foster kittens **MUST** be transported in carriers at all times. Carriers may also be used as their "sleeping quarters" if there is sufficient room for all to stretch out and be comfy.

FOOD: Please use only the food provided by the Jefferson City Animal Shelter. You will be supplied with both dry kitten food and canned kitten food, and formula if needed. If, for whatever reason, your fosters don't like the food provided we will provide you with an alternative diet. Any change at all in your foster's diet must first be approved by our vet staff. This policy is to ensure we can inform adopters of the current diets, and to eliminate gastrointestinal-related to diet changes when they return to the shelter from a foster home.

A mother cat is given the same dry and canned KITTEN food (rather than adult cat food) for extra nutrition while nursing. For orphaned newborns who need to be bottle-fed, we will provide you with kitten milk replacer (KMR) formula and bottles. Providing free-choice dry food

is recommended at all times once kittens are old enough, and offering fresh canned food several times a day (see “Kitten Feeding and Development by age” chart on page 15 for more details).

CAT LITTER: Please use only the cat litter supplied by The Jefferson City Animal Shelter, which is non-clumping. Clumping litter may be dangerous if ingested by kittens.

LITTER BOX: We can supply you with disposable shallow cardboard flats, or plastic reusable litter boxes. We prefer to send disposable cardboard flats for litters of kittens to ease clean-up and reduce disease spread, and plastic boxes if you have a mother cat with your litter of kittens. If you choose to use your own litter box, we recommend that you purchase a new litter box every time you bring home a new litter of fosters if your previous foster kittens had diarrhea diagnosed as coccidia. Plastic is easily scratched or chewed on, making effective cleaning and disinfection difficult. Coccidia is very difficult to eliminate from the environment, so discarding the litter box is best to prevent reinfection or new fosters from becoming infected.

WATER BOWL: If available, we would like fosters to use ceramic/porcelain or stainless steel bowls and NOT plastic, as plastic is difficult to disinfect due to its porosity. The heavier the bowl the better to not tip over.

FOOD BOWLS: One bowl for the entire litter for free-choice dry kitten food and another bowl for the canned wet food. It is usually best to have a separate bowl/dish for each kitten to eat canned wet food from to ensure that each kitten gets its fair share. Inevitably there is a food bully in the litter that may crowd out a less assertive sibling.

HEATING DEVICE: From 3-4 weeks of age and older, the floor temperature of the kitten’s environment should be as close to 70-75°F For younger ones, their sleeping environment should be closer to 85-90°F In order to maintain this temperature, you will need a heating device, which we will supply to you as a microwavable “warmie” disc. It is important to always make sure there is a large enough area for the kittens to move off of the heating source as they may get too warm. Electrical heating pads used on the low heating **ONLY** can also be used if we are unable to provide you with a warmie disk. Wrap both the electrical cord and heating pad in a towel to safeguard kittens, so they don’t chew on those surfaces.

SCALE: We are not yet able to provide scales to our foster families. If you have a postal or food scale at home, this would be very helpful in monitoring the weight gain of very young kittens. This is particularly important for newborn kittens and those up to 4 weeks old. A weight gain of 3-4 ounces each week usually indicates these very young kittens are doing well.



TOYS: We occasionally receive a donation of toys and can provide you with some at those times. Kittens need 2 types of toys: interactive and solo. Toys should be easy to clean (soaked in a mild bleach solution) or disposable (foil balls, paper tubes, plush) and impossible to consume (ping-pong balls). Solo toys can be left with the kittens to play on their own when you are not there. They should not have any small parts that can be eaten or chewed off and swallowed. Interactive toys can be chewed off, swallowed and cause harm to the kitten. These toys should only be used for play with kittens under adult supervision.

TOWELS AND BLANKETS: We have ample supplies of these. Let us know when you are picking up kittens if you need any of these items and we will gladly provide you with some.

NEST BOX: To help keep younger kittens and bottle babies warm you can create a nest box using a large cardboard box, plastic kennel, or wire cage with towels draped over the sides to prevent drafts. If you use a wire crate or plastic kennel, create a nest with towels for the kittens to curl up in.



Safeguarding all the Animals

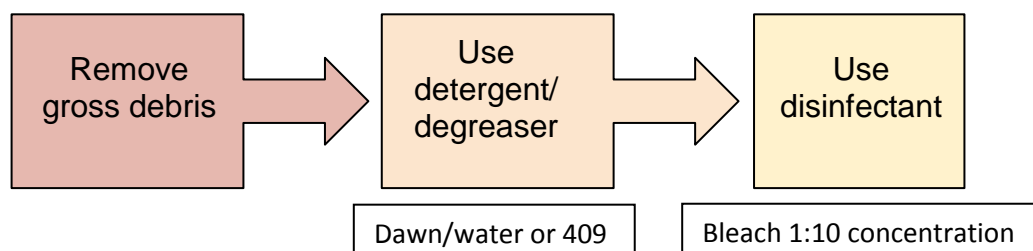
First and foremost, we want to protect the health of you, your resident pets and the fosters. We need to be concerned about your pets introducing disease to the foster kittens as well as the fosters introducing diseases to your pets. There are even some diseases that can be transmitted to people, such as ringworm.

The JCAS recommends that all foster volunteers keep their resident animals current on their annual vaccinations and flea preventative. **As an added precaution, foster kittens MUST be separated from your resident pets for an initial period of 2 weeks.** This 2-week period of time is deemed sufficient for fosters to become symptomatic of most diseases they may be incubating. However, there are a few like Feline Leukemia Virus and Ringworm, which may take longer to exhibit symptoms. Therefore, we strongly recommend, if possible, that fosters be kept separate from your resident pets for the entire fostering period. Having a totally separate room for the fosters would be ideal. If you are unable to create a separate room for your fosters there should be no sharing of food and water bowls, litter boxes or toys with your personal pets.

Good personal hygiene of washing hands with soap and water should be practiced regularly, both before and after contact, with foster kittens. We are concerned with the health of ALL animals under your care. As thorough and careful as we try to be in our examinations of the foster kittens before sending them out, there is still a real risk of disease transmission. Hence the strong recommendation to keep your pets separated from the fosters. As a reminder, the Jefferson City Animal Shelter cannot be responsible for the health of your resident pets.

Cleaning between litters of kittens is another precaution against the spread of disease. After a litter of kittens is returned to the JCAS, the fostering room and all related foster kitten items will need to be sanitized before another litter is brought home. All surfaces should be first cleaned with a detergent (such as 409 or Dawn/water mixture) and then disinfected with a bleach solution (1 ounce bleach to 32 ounces water). More details in the Tid Bits section of the manual. Bleach is easily inactivated by organic debris, so cleaning first is imperative

The 3 steps to *effective* cleaning



General Kitten Care

Heating

It is VERY important to keep kittens warm. They do not thrive unless they are in an environment with an area that is between 80 to 90 degrees. The microwavable heating disks provided are ideal for this, as they stay warm for up to 12 hours. Make sure that the heating disk is placed under a towel or blanket. DO NOT allow kittens to lay directly on the heating disk, to prevent burns. It is also important to make sure that the kittens have enough space to move away from the heating source. Keep in mind the smaller the litter, the more help they will need to keep warm. Larger litters are better able to keep themselves warm by piling on top of each other into a big heap. Use the following chart after referencing your microwave power wattage for appropriate microwave times for the heating disks.



POWER	TIME
600 - 650 watts	8 minutes
700 - 750 watts	7 minutes
800 - 850 watts	6 minutes
900 - 1,000 watts	5 minutes
1,100 - 1,200 watts	4 minutes
1,300 - 1,400 watts	2½ minutes

Feeding

Follow the feeding guidelines in the “Expectations and Care At Various Ages” section. For neonatal kittens you can keep track of feedings and weights on the “Daily Weights and Feedings Record”. DO NOT give milk or other dairy products, as it will lead to diarrhea.

Elimination

Young kittens (3 weeks or less) need help urinating and defecating. To do so, gently rub a warm cloth or cotton pad on the anus and genital areas immediately after a feeding. This will stimulate kittens to urinate and/or defecate into the cloth or cotton pad. If a mother cat is present she will stimulate the kittens. Remember to wash your hands afterwards.

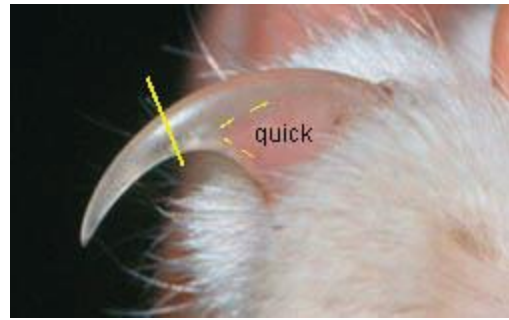
Cleaning/ Bathing

Kittens are usually groomed by their mother. In the absence of the mother, you must work hard to keep the kittens clean.

Dried feces in the fur can be removed with a flea comb. If the kittens have feces caked on their paws and back end, it can be easier to dip them in a warm water bath to help soften the fecal matter making it easier to remove, a small amount of Dawn dish soap can be used if needed. Be sure to dry the kittens well so that they don't get chilled.

Nail Trims

You can use regular human nail clippers to trim your foster kittens nails. This will help them become accustomed to having their nails trimmed, as well as reduce the potential damage to you and your house as kittens naturally climb and play. Use one hand to push down at the base of a nail, which will hold cause the nail to be more visible and hold the digit still. Clip the end of the nail through the clear area, NOT the pink area (the quick). The quick contains blood vessels and nerves.



Socializing

Socialization is a very important part of kitten care. It is your job to convince kittens that humans are kind and loving. Allow kittens to acclimate to their new environment before trying to play with them. This usually takes just one day. Outgoing kittens can be cuddled and played with.

Shy kittens need to have many short encounters to encourage them that humans are friendly and loving. Hold shy kittens calmly, stroking them and talking to them in a comforting voice. Put the kitten down before he or she starts squirming. If you repeat this often, perhaps only 30 seconds at a time, shy kittens will begin to love the experience.

Feral Kittens

These kittens are a special challenge to socialize. The earlier feral kittens separate from their mother, the more likely they are to adapt to people. Even at 6 weeks, feral kittens can act like little tiger cubs. You will need to be patient and give feral kittens plenty of time to adjust. Try sitting or lying quietly on the floor near them and let them come to you. Spend time quietly in their presence to get them accustomed to your company. Stroke them and talk to them gently while they are eating to further reinforce positive associations. Not all kittens will grow into cats that love to be cuddled and held. This is ok! Although some people want affectionate cats, others prefer independent pets.

Litter Box Training

Use a low box, such as cardboard flats from the grocery store (we can provide to you), with one inch of non-clumping kitty litter. Clumping cat litter can be dangerous if it is ingested. After feeding, place the kitten in the litter box. Take their paw and gently scratch the litter. Give lots of praise when they are successful. Be patient! Keep the litter box clean and away from the food area. Note: Litter boxes will not be used for neonates. Most kittens innately know to use a litter box, so little to no training is required.



Feeding Bottle Babies

DO NOT FEED COWS MILK! ONLY feed KMR (kitten milk replacer), supplied to you by the JCAS.

1. Be sure that all bottles and nipples are clean before using.
2. **To make kitten formula:** mix 1 part KMR with 2 parts of warm water. Do not mix more than can be used in a 24-hour period; it will only last 24 hours once it has been reconstituted and should be kept refrigerated. The KMR powder should be kept refrigerated after opening. Be sure to mix and shake formula well, as small chunks of powder will easily clog the nipple.

Fill the bottle with KMR formula and warm refrigerated formula by placing the bottle in a mug of very hot water. Test the temperature of the milk on your wrist before feeding your kitten. Test the nipple to ensure that the milk is flowing through correctly. It should not drip when held upside down, but should drip when given a small amount of pressure on the bottle.

3. Place the kitten prone (belly down, **NEVER on its back**) on a towel or blanket. Make sure the kitten is warm before feeding. Feeding formula to a cold kitten can cause serious digestive problems. Without raising the kitten's head, place the kitten's head gently on your palm and guide the nipple into its mouth. Be sure to tilt the bottle up slightly (45 degree angle) to prevent the kitten from inhaling too much air.
4. If the kitten does not start nursing right away, or if it seems to have trouble getting the milk, check the nipple again. It may also be helpful to stroke his head gently or pet his back to start his nursing reflexes. Pulling lightly on the bottle or twisting the nipples while in the kitten's mouth can also encourage the kitten to suckle.
5. **NEVER SQUEEZE THE BOTTLE TO FORCE MILK DOWN THE KITTENS THROAT!** This could force the formula into the kitten's lungs and cause pneumonia and possible death.
6. After feeding, your kitten may need to be burped. This can be done by holding the kitten against your shoulder and gently massaging or patting it's back.
7. Each kitten will need manual stimulation by you to encourage elimination. Lightly rub the anus and genital area with a warm washcloth or dampened paper towel. It may take a couple of feedings to see a bowel movement. You should see urine every time.
8. Kitten will sleep after feedings, so they should be placed in a warm area to rest.
9. Do not underfeed or overfeed your kitten. To find out how much and how frequently your kitten should be fed, please refer to the Kitten Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart.

Chart: Kitten Bottle Feeding + Stomach Capacity

Estimated Kitten Age (weeks)	Kitten Weight (lbs, oz)	Kitten Weight (grams)	Daily Caloric Requirement *	Amount of Formula per day (ml)**	Amount Per Feeding (ml)*	Approx. # of Feedings Per Day***
<1 week	2 oz	57 g	11 kcal	15 ml	2 ml	7
	3 oz	85 g	17 kcal	23 ml	3 ml	7
	4 oz	113 g	23 kcal	31 ml	5 ml	7
1 week	5 oz	142 g	28 kcal	38 ml	6 ml	7
	6 oz	170 g	34 kcal	46 ml	7 ml	7
	7 oz	198 g	40 kcal	54 ml	8 ml	7
	8 oz	227 g	45 kcal	61 ml	9 ml	7
2 weeks	9 oz	255 g	51 kcal	69 ml	10 ml	7
	10 oz	283 g	57 kcal	77 ml	11 ml	7
	11 oz	312 g	62 kcal	84 ml	12 ml	6-7
3 weeks+	12 oz	340 g	68 kcal	92 ml	14 ml	6-7
	13 oz	369 g	74 kcal	100 ml	15 ml	6
	14 oz	397 g	79 kcal	107 ml	16 ml	5
	15 oz	425 g	85 kcal	115 ml	17 ml	5
4 weeks+	16 oz (1 lb)	454 g	91 kcal	123 ml	18 ml	5
	1 lb, 1 oz	482 g	96 kcal	130 ml	19 ml	4
	1 lb, 2 oz	510 g	102 kcal	138 ml	20 ml	4
	1 lb, 3 oz	539 g	108 kcal	146 ml	22 ml	4
5 weeks+	1 lb, 4 oz	567 g	113 kcal	153 ml	23 ml	4

*The daily caloric requirement was calculated using 20 kcal/100 g body weight and the amount per feeding using 4 ml/100 g body weight. The energy requirement is ~20-26 kcal/100 g body weight daily and the maximum comfortable stomach capacity is ~4 ml/100 g body weight.¹

**Concentration 0.74 kcal/ml. Most commercial kitten milk replacers in the US provide less than 1 kcal/ml (0.74 kcal/ml), acting to increase the volume of milk required to meet caloric needs. This can be problematic in terms of the number and size of feedings given relative to stomach capacity and more likely to result in gastrointestinal disturbances. This may also account for why bottle-fed kittens grow slower than kittens that nurse off a mother.

***As the kitten is adjusting well to the milk and the feeding volume, you may be able to increase the volume fed to help reduce the number of feedings per day. Be aware that exceeding the stomach capacity (amount per feeding) may put the kitten at risk of aspiration, vomiting, diarrhea, and gas build-up in the stomach and intestines.

+Kittens at this age (3-1 weeks) are usually eating some solid food, decreasing the amount of milk replacer required to meet daily caloric requirements. This may result in less frequent milk feedings.

¹Cited reference:

Lawler, D.F. "Neonatal and pediatric care of the puppy and kitten." Theriogenology, vol. 70, no.3, 2008, pp. 384-392.

Additional references:

Cline, Jill. "Cattery Management and Nutrition of the Queen and Her Offspring." Management of Pregnant and Neonatal Dogs, Cats and Exotic Pets, edited by Cheryl Lopate, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2012, pp. 15-24.

Zambelli, Daniele. "Feline Neonatal Physiology, Behavior, and Socialization." Management of Pregnant and Neonatal Dogs, Cats and Exotic Pets, edited by Cheryl Lopate, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2012, pp. 145-158.

Kitten Feeding and Development by Age

WEEKS	FEEDING	DEVELOPMENT
0-1	See Feeding Chart pg. 14. Overnight feedings can be every 3-4 hours. If there is a Mom cat, make sure that all kittens are nursing at a time. A lot of crying or activity could indicate a problem with Mom's milk supply.	Kittens will weigh about 4 oz. Kittens will sleep 90% of the time and eat the rest of the time. Handle the kittens minimally. Newborns are deaf and blind and are unable to maintain their body temperature. Keep kittens warm with provided heating source. Normal temp 96-99 degrees
1-2	See Feeding Chart pg. 14. Overnight feedings can be every 3-4 hours.	Kittens will weigh about 7 oz. Ear canals open between 5-8 days. Eyes open between 8-14 days. Healthy kittens will be round and warm and have pink skin. Healthy kittens seldom cry. They are still unable to maintain their body temperature. Keep kittens warm with provided heat source. Normal temp 96-99 degrees
2-3	See Feeding Chart pg 14. Overnight feedings can be every 4 hours.	Kittens will weigh about 10 oz and will begin to crawl and stand between 18-21 days old. Ears become erect and canals open completely. Play begins! Teeth start to become more noticeable. Increase handling of kittens to get them used to human contact. Ensure that all interactions are gentle and positive. They are still unable to maintain their body temperature. Keep kittens warm with the provided heat source. Normal temp 98-100 degrees
3-4	See Feeding Chart pg. 14. Kittens may start lapping food from a bowl. Feedings during the night are not required, unless kittens are not thriving.	Kittens will weigh about 13 oz. Kittens begin to see well and permanent adult eye color will start to appear. They may start cleaning themselves but will still need help for serious cleaning. Litter box training may begin at 4 weeks of age. (See Litter Box Training description in the General Care of Kittens section pg. 13.) They are still unable to maintain their body temperature. Keep kittens warm with provided heating source. Normal Temp 98-100 degrees
4-5	Weaning of kittens may begin gradually. (See the Weaning Your Kitten section pg. 17.)	Litter box training may begin at 4 weeks of age (see Litter Box Training in the General Care of Kittens section pg. 13.) DO NOT use clumping litter!! It can be dangerous to kittens if ingested. Normal temp 100-101
5-6	Feed gruel 4 times a day, thicken gradually. Introduce dry food and water closer to 6 weeks of age. Some kittens do not like canned food – try mixing any meat flavored human baby food with water. Be sure the meat flavor does NOT have onion powder as this is hazardous to kittens. Leave dry food and water out at all times.	Kittens weigh between 1- 1.5 lbs. Kittens can start to wander around the room, under supervision. Play with your kittens often! (See Socialization description in the General Care of Kittens section pg. 12) Normal temp 100-101
6-7	Feed canned and dry food at least 3 times a day. If any kittens are territorial with food, provide a second bowl so that everyone gets fed. Leave dry food and water out at all times.	Kittens weigh 1.5lbs. Kittens will start to act like actual cats: playing and washing themselves. Be sure to show them the litter box after meals, play sessions and naps. Normal temp 100-101 degrees
7-8	Each kitten will be eating a little over one can of food per day. Offer wet food 1-2 times per day, trying to wean them completely off wet food in preparation for adoption. Leave a bowl of dry food and water for kittens to eat and drink at will. DO NOT feed kittens table scraps.	Kittens will weigh around 1 ¼ lbs. Continue playing and socializing kittens. Normal temp 100-101 degrees
8+	Leave a bowl of dry food and water for kittens to eat and drink at will. DO NOT feed kittens table scraps.	Kittens should be about 2 pounds. When they reach this point, they are ready for adoption and for spay/neuter surgery.

Record: Daily Weight and Feeding (use as needed if desired)

Name	1:	2:	3:	4:	5:	6:
Date						
Weight						
Milk Volume #1						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #2						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #3						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #4						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #5						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #6						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #7						
Stool/Urine						
Total Volume						

Name	1:	2:	3:	4:	5:	6:
Date						
Weight						
Milk Volume #1						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #2						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #3						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #4						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #5						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #6						
Stool/Urine						
Milk Volume #7						
Stool/Urine						
Total Volume						

Weaning Your Bottle Baby

1. Weaning your kitten can begin around 4-5 weeks of age.
2. Start by serving them KMR in a shallow bowl. Dip one fingertip (or bottle the kitten is used to nursing from) into the liquid; let the kitten lick it, and then guide him by moving your finger down into the bowl. **Do not force the kitten to drink.** This concept is easy for some kittens to grasp but not for all, so be patient. Bottle feeding may still be required as the kitten learns to eat from the bowl. You can help with the gradual transition by always offering the bowl first and then the bottle.
3. When the kitten is lapping up the KMR liquid well, it is time to make gruel. This is a mixture of canned kitten food and KMR. As the kitten gets accustomed to eating, gradually decrease the amount of KMR, while slowly increasing the amount of canned kitten food.
4. If your kitten seems uninterested in the canned kitten food and KMR gruel, try using any kind of human baby food meats (DO NOT use anything with onion powder in it as it can be dangerous for kittens), if that still does not work, the veterinary staff may suggest that another type of canned food be used instead to help encourage eating. Please do not try any food without first discussing it with the veterinary staff at the Jefferson City Animal Shelter. You can also try heating the gruel in the microwave for 8-10 seconds. Give the gruel a good stir and check temperature before feeding to your kitten. The gruel should only be warm to the touch.
5. A kitten should be completely weaned off the KMR and bottle by 6 weeks of age, and eating canned kitten food. The warmed, canned kitten food will be offered to them 1-2 times a day. At this time, you can also introduce dry kitten food. Make sure they have clean fresh water at all times.
6. From 6-7 weeks of age, kittens should be eating dry and canned kitten food on their own. Gradually start weaning them off of the canned food by 7-8 weeks of age. **In preparation for adoption we would like ALL kittens to be eating dry kitten food only by the time they hit the 2-pound mark and are ready to come back to the shelter.** Kittens in adoption get dry food only, so making sure your kitten is weaned from canned food will make the transition to adoption much less stressful.

Fostering Moms and Babies

In some cases, moms are fostered together with their litters. There are a few things to keep in mind for this type of foster situation. Moms require a calm setting with privacy and minimal activity. Stress can cause moms to stop taking care of their kittens.

Bringing Mom Home

You will need a separate space for a mom with her litter, away from your pets. When you first bring them home, leave them alone in their new space. Mom will need some time, up to a few days, to adjust to her new space. Be sure to offer mom fresh food, water, and a clean litter box. Nursing moms should have dry kitten food left out at all times while nursing.

Socialization

Even adult cats need socialization; however, proceed slowly with any adult cat that you do not know. Create situations for socialization but let her come to you. Stop the session if you notice any negative signs, such as swishing of the tail, ears laid back, head jerk towards you, tensing up, cranky meow, moving away, hissing or growling.

Mom and Her Kittens

For the first few weeks after giving birth, mom will do everything necessary to take care of her kittens. Kittens start nursing very soon after birth. Mom will also groom her kittens. Cats should be left alone for the first two weeks except to feed, clean, water and check on the kittens a few times a day.

Possible Issues with Mom Cats

Maternal neglect – In some cases, about 8% of the time, kittens die from poor maternal care. There are a few causes of this. Some cats lack maternal instincts and, in other cases, it is nature's way of handling sick or weak kittens. Environmental stress is an important factor, which is why it is important to create a calm environment for mom and her litter. As a foster parent, watch for signs of maternal neglect. Call the shelter if you notice the mom avoids feeding and grooming her kittens and ignores their cries.

Maternal aggression – As mom protects her kittens, it is common for her to be aggressive towards humans or other animals. Do not try to introduce your household pets to your foster mom as this adds too much stress to the environment. If aggression becomes severe, call the shelter.

Maintaining Kitten Health

Foster kittens are given an exam prior to going out into foster, but they can, and do, often break with signs of illness once in your home. It is critical to monitor them closely and to contact the shelter if you notice any signs of illness. Please reference the “emergency” section to see when to contact the shelter with your concerns.

Healthy kittens have bright eyes, a sleek coat and a plump belly. Their eyes and noses are generally free from discharge. Normal body temperatures for kitten’s range slightly according to age (see the Expectations and Care by age).

Taking a Temperature

If you think a kitten is sick, the first step is to take the temperature of the kitten. Use a regular human thermometer and KY Jelly. Wipe KY on the thermometer and insert just the tip into the kitten’s anus. After holding it for at least a minute, remove and read the temperature. If the temperature is over 103 or under 99, call the shelter. (Note: Kittens temp at 0-2 weeks is normally 96-99 degrees.)

Measuring Growth at Home

Kittens are weighed to measure growth and development. If you have a scale available at home, weigh neonatal kittens (those under 4 weeks) daily, at the same time each day, to ensure growth and weight gain. Kittens over 4 weeks of age can be weighed every 2-3 days at home. Kitten should gain 3-4 ounces per week.

When weighing your kitten if you notice he or she has lost or not gained weight please call the Animal Shelter.



Illness in Foster Kittens

The following is meant to serve as a reference for common illnesses, and a guide for what to do if seen in your foster kittens. Please reference the “emergency” section to see when to contact the shelter, if not referenced below.

Diarrhea

There are three types of cat stool: normal, soft, and diarrhea. Normal stool in older kittens and adults is firm and has a definite shape; younger kittens normally have softer stool. Soft stool is not firm but still has some shape. Diarrhea is liquid, with or without abnormal color to it. Diarrhea is common in kittens and can be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, over feeding and other issues.

When you first notice soft stool, drop off a stool sample during business hours. In order to bring in a stool sample, double bag it in a ziplock bag or sealed container. The fresher the stool sample, the better. Remember, softer stool is normal in young kittens and is not cause for concern as long as kittens are gaining weight.

Diarrhea must be monitored as it can quickly lead to dehydration. If the kitten is active, mild diarrhea that occurs for 24 hours is NOT a concern. Feed the kittens less at a time but more often. See “Emergencies” for instructions on what to do with more severe diarrhea.

Constipation

Constipation is most common in bottle babies and young kittens. Monitor your kitten closely if they have not defecated to ensure that they are eating, bright, playful, and urinating. As long as they seem well otherwise it is okay to wait up to three days for a bowel movement. If more than three days have passed, contact the JCAS during normal business hours for an appointment to bring the kitten in. Sometimes, kittens with diarrhea will strain when defecating, which may give the appearance that a kitten is constipated. Please check the litter box to assess stool consistency if you are unsure.



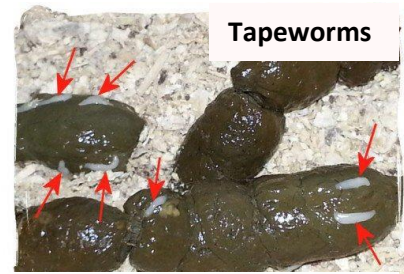
Intestinal Parasites

You may see **tapeworms** either on feces or on the hairs around their anus. These look like grains of rice.

Roundworms look like spaghetti and can be in the litter box or in vomit.

Some parasites, like **coccidia**, are not visible without microscopic exam of the stool. Kittens with coccidia will have diarrhea (and sometimes vomiting or inappetence) and will require a change of their litter box daily throughout treatment.

Kittens are given strongid, a general de-wormer that covers roundworms and hookworms, before going out to foster care and then every 3 weeks. If you notice parasites or diarrhea in your kitten please contact the shelter during normal business hours.



Skin Parasites

Fleas

Most of the kittens we receive in our foster program are born outdoors, and most come to us with external parasites such as fleas. Kittens are examined prior to being sent out to foster and treated with Revolution for fleas and earmites. However, if you notice live fleas on your kittens more than 24 hours after taking home, contact the shelter during normal business hours. Revolution is reapplied every 30 days.



Ear Mites

Kittens with ear mites will scratch at their ears and shake their heads. You may notice a bald spot behind the ear from the kitten's continuous scratching. Inside the ear, the canal is often filled with dark debris that looks like coffee grounds. Ear mites are contagious to other animals. The shelter treats all kittens with Revolution for fleas and ear mites before being sent out to foster. However, it often takes some time for the debris to work its way out of the ear canal.



Ringworm

Ringworm is a highly contagious fungal skin disease in kittens that is transmissible to humans and other animals. It is most commonly found on the head, tail and extremities (legs and feet). Ringworm is treatable and is never fatal, but is something that needs to be caught at onset because of how contagious it is and how difficult it can be to eradicate from your home. Ringworm can sometimes take several weeks to appear so checking your kitten over daily is recommended in order to catch it right away.

Ringworm causes patchy hair loss and the skin underneath often appears rough and scaly. The spot will usually get larger and additional spots often appear within a week or so. If you notice that your kittens have any hair loss, please drop them off at the shelter as soon as possible so a culture can be taken and treatment can begin.



Cleaning after suspect ringworm: A more concentrated bleach solution is needed (1 part bleach to 10 parts water) with 10 minutes of contact time.

Vomiting

Sometimes kittens can vomit due to eating too rapidly or too much. Watch your kittens and if this is the case feed them smaller portions more frequently rather than one large meal all at once. Vomiting is not serious unless it happens continuously as it can lead to dehydration. If vomiting occurs 2-3 times in a row, or is seen in conjunction with diarrhea, please alert the shelter (see “Emergencies” for instructions).

Sneezing, Nasal and Eye Discharge

Occasional sneezing is common in kittens. However, if it becomes more frequent or if it progresses to having nose or eye discharge, this is a sign of a common disease in kittens called an upper respiratory infection (URI). URI is essentially a cat “cold” and is usually just viral in nature, but can progress to a life threatening bacterial infection in some cases. If your kitten is showing signs of mild, clear eye or nose discharge, just monitor the kitten. If symptoms worsen or there is no improvement in 7-10 days, call the shelter during normal business hours for an appointment or drop off. If your kitten is having moderate or severe eye and nasal discharge, or yellow/green colored discharge from the eyes or nose, please call the shelter to make an appointment or bring into the shelter the next day.

Treatment for URI can range from just monitoring for mild viral signs, to antibiotics, eye ointments, and fluid therapy for more severe infections. You can use a warm damp towel to wipe affected eye(s) clean. It is important to make sure your kittens continue to eat.

Fading Kitten Syndrome

Fading Kitten Syndrome is a life-threatening emergency in which a kitten, sometimes one that was previously healthy, “crashes” and begins to fade away. It must be addressed immediately.

Signs

- Low Body Temperature: the kitten feels cool/cold to the touch, or has a low rectal temperature
- Extreme Lethargy: not getting up, unable to stand, not responding when pet
- Gasping for breath
- Meowing/Crying out
- Weakness and incoordination

It is caused by 2 things: **Hypothermia** (being too cold) and **Hypoglycemia** (low blood sugar) **When this happens, it is vital that you take these immediate steps!**

Step 1- Get them warm

Create the “burrito” towel. Immediately wrap the kitten up in a towel like a burrito leaving the face exposed only. Their whole body, tail, ears, and paws should be in the towel, only nose and mouth exposed. **Do NOT take the kitten out of the towel to adjust them, check on them, etc... this is very important!** Every time you take them out you will make them cold again, even if it’s only for a second. Wrap a HEATING PAD turned onto *low*, or incorporate a microwavable warmie, around the burrito towel (to avoid burns) as an EXTRA source of heat. Secure it around the towel so it stays in place or place on a warming disk.

Step 2- Get their blood sugar up

Once you get the heat on them:

- Get a bowl or Tupperware add a few tablespoons of sugar in hot water. Stir it so you get a sugar water solution; as strong as possible while still pretty runny.
- Using a syringe or your finger give 3 drops every 3 minutes into the mouth or gums

Step 3- For support, call the Jefferson City Animal Shelter: At 573-634-6429

Monday-Friday 8am-4:30pm. After hours call 573-340-5437 and leave a message, the shelter vet will call you back. Keep the kitten with you and continue sugar every 3 minutes. We won’t have any further advice for you that isn’t listed above, and prefer that these be treated in foster after-hours if possible as we do not have staff at the shelter after hours. Sometimes it can take hours for them to recover.

Keep in mind, even with all the love and attention and perfect treatment of this condition, some of them won’t make it. Try not to blame yourself during this difficult time and focus on all the kittens you have personally saved by fostering for the shelter. Any kitten you’ve ever taken care of was given a second chance at life BECAUSE of YOU! The survival rate with your care FAR surpasses their survival rate in nature.

Emergencies

Please reference the table below to see what qualifies as an emergency, and what can wait until the next day. **For after hour emergencies, you will need to call 573-340-5437 and leave a message and the JCAS staff veterinarian will call you back as soon as possible.** If you do not receive a phone call within 10 minutes, please call back and leave another message.

NON-EMERGENCIES	EMERGENCIES
<p><u>Call 573-634-6429 during normal business hours (M-Sa at 8AM-4:30PM) and ask to speak with a member of the vet staff</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Runny discharge from the eyes or nose - Coughing or sneezing - Swollen eyes or eyes held closed - Lack of bowel movements for more than 3 days or straining in the litter box - Vomiting </3 times in 24 hours - Weight loss - Minor Bleeding (nose, in urine or stool) - Live fleas or earmites - Parasites in stool or vomit <p><u>Drop off kittens at the shelter the next day (please call first to let us know you're coming)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack/loss of appetite - Diarrhea lasting more than 24 hours - Lethargy (lack of energy) - Suspected ringworm - Poor body condition/ weight loss in a previously healthy-appearing kitten 	<p>REQUIRES IMMEDIATE VETERINARY ATTENTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any severe trauma (severe limping, unconscious, wounds) - Difficulty breathing - Not responsive to stimulations - Fading Kittens - see protocol - Vomiting >3 times in 24 hours <hr/> <p>If during business hours (M-Sa 8am-4:30pm)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Call 573-634-6429 <hr/> <p>If after hours (after 4:30pm M-Sa, or on Sunday)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Call 573-340-5439 and leave a message. The shelter vet will call you back.

The Jefferson City Animal Shelter must approve any and all treatments for foster pets.

- If the Shelter has not approved any or all treatments to foster pets, the foster parent will be responsible for ALL costs.
- If the foster parent takes a foster to any other veterinary or emergency clinic than the one designated by the Jefferson City Animal Shelter, the foster parent will be responsible for ALL costs.
- The Jefferson City Animal Shelter has a policy that we will NOT reimburse individuals for vet bills for foster animals when taken for veterinary care outside of that which is preauthorized by the JCAS.

TID BITS

Why do you have two phone numbers?

574-634-6429 is the main shelter line; please call it with all questions and concerns about your fosters, the foster program, etc. during normal business hours (M-Sa, 8AM-4:30PM). If you have a non-emergency after hours, please call this number the next business day.

573-340-5439 is a Google Voice number that is used exclusively for the JCAS foster program; it is not a cell phone number. As an alternative to staff giving out their personal phone numbers to the foster base (sorry, we do need some down-time away from rescue work!), we've set up this account. **This number is to be used only for foster placement texts, and emergencies phone calls after hours (leave a message and we'll call you back)!!!** Text messages that you send us are viewed on a computer screen, so if we don't happen to have the Google Voice web page open when you send us a message, we won't see it until later. We will have the account open and checked frequently when actively placing foster kittens.

How long are kittens in foster care?

Kittens are in foster care anywhere from 1 week to 2 months depending on the kitten's weight when they come in. They need to be fostered until they are 2 pounds.

It's the WEIGHT, not the DATE.

If a kitten meets a minimum weight but is on medication, it is best to wait until the course of medication has been completed before bringing the kitten in for spay/neuter surgery.

Occasionally, there can be quite a difference in weights among siblings. Ideally it is best to keep at least two siblings out of a litter together until they all have hit the 2 pound mark, for their behavioral development.

What happens, if for any reason, I need to bring the foster kitten(s) back to the shelter before they are ready for spay/neuter surgery?

Life happens! We understand that you do have a life outside of our foster program and occasionally unexpected events occur that make it difficult to continue fostering. Please contact the shelter in the event that you can no longer foster to arrange for the kittens return.

How should I clean the fostering room between litters of foster kittens?

Begin by removing all bedding, food/water bowls, litter boxes and toys.

General cleaning: First, clean all surfaces within kitten reach with a mild soap/water solution, or a cleaner such as 409. Follow by cleaning with a weak bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts cold water).

Food/water bowls and plastic toys: These can be washed in the dishwasher, or cleaned with a soap/water solution and then soaked in the weak bleach solution for 10 minutes. Any plush toys, or those with non-cleanable material, should be discarded if your kittens had any illness.

Laundry: Any towels or other bedding obtained from the shelter can be dropped off at the shelter for washing. If laundering at home, we recommend washing in hot water with bleach.

Plastic litter boxes: If you use plastic litter boxes, and your kittens **haven't** had diarrhea problems or been diagnosed with coccidia, a thorough scrubbing with soap/water followed by soaking in weak bleach solution (1:32 concentration) for 10 minutes is sufficient. If your kittens **have** been diagnosed with diarrhea problems or coccidia ALL plastic litter boxes need to be thrown away.

Ringworm: Cleaning after suspected ringworm requires a more concentrated bleach solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. There needs to be a 10 minute contact time for maximum results.

How do I introduce a new diet/food that has been recommended by the shelter veterinarian?

Slowly transitioning from the old food to the new food is the key to introducing a new food with the least amount of digestive upset to the kittens. The general "formula" is starting with ½ of the old food to ½ of the new food. Then over a period of 5-7 days, increase the amount of the new food slowly so that by the end of the 7th day, you have transitioned the kitten totally to the new food. Unless the veterinarian gives you specific instructions otherwise, please follow this "formula" whenever you are changing diets.

How should I introduce the kittens to their new environment?

Starting with a small space where they can see the litter box from anywhere in the room is recommended. After the 2 week separation period from your resident pets, you may let your fosters have access to larger areas within your home, but it is best to make sure they have their litter box habits well ingrained first. We still strongly recommend, if possible, that fosters be kept separate from your resident pets for the entire fostering period.

How many litter boxes should I use?

Generally, 1 litter box for 2 kittens should be sufficient; as long as neither has diarrhea and they are cleaned at least once daily. When you allow them larger access to your home, it is best to scatter litter boxes in each room. That way, no matter which room they are in, the sight of the litter box will remind them where to go.

Why do you recommend a separate, canned food dish for each kitten?

You may not necessarily see the “food bully” when you feed them but there is usually one in each litter. Some less assertive kittens/runts will not go back to eat once he/she has been pushed away from the food bowl. This may result in weight loss and general decline in health.

How do you discourage kittens from biting fingers/ hands?

When playing with kittens, always have toys available. This will help discourage kittens from biting hands, feet and other body parts. It is very important to teach kittens that hands are for petting and toys are for playing. When kittens nip while you’re petting them, stay calm and ignore them for 10-15 seconds before interacting any further so that nipping is not rewarded.

How should I “kitten-proof” my home?

The kittens climbing and jumping abilities develop quickly as they grow, so keep anything you don’t want damaged out of their reach. Also, watch for objects which may fall or get knocked over. Falling objects are dangerous to kittens on the ground. Block any electrical outlets, hide objects they could swallow or get tangled in. Crouch down to the kittens’ level to see if there are any holes or openings where the kittens might hide or become inaccessible to you. Make sure to keep the toilet lids down at all times. Their curiosity gets them into everything!

What if I decide that I want to adopt my foster kitten?

If you decide that you’d like to adopt your foster kitten, please let us know when you drop them off for their spay or neuter. We will call you when they are ready to go home and you can come and get them during normal business hours, Monday-Saturday 8-4:30pm. Adoption process and fee of \$50 cash or check will apply to fosters who wish to adopt their kitten(s).